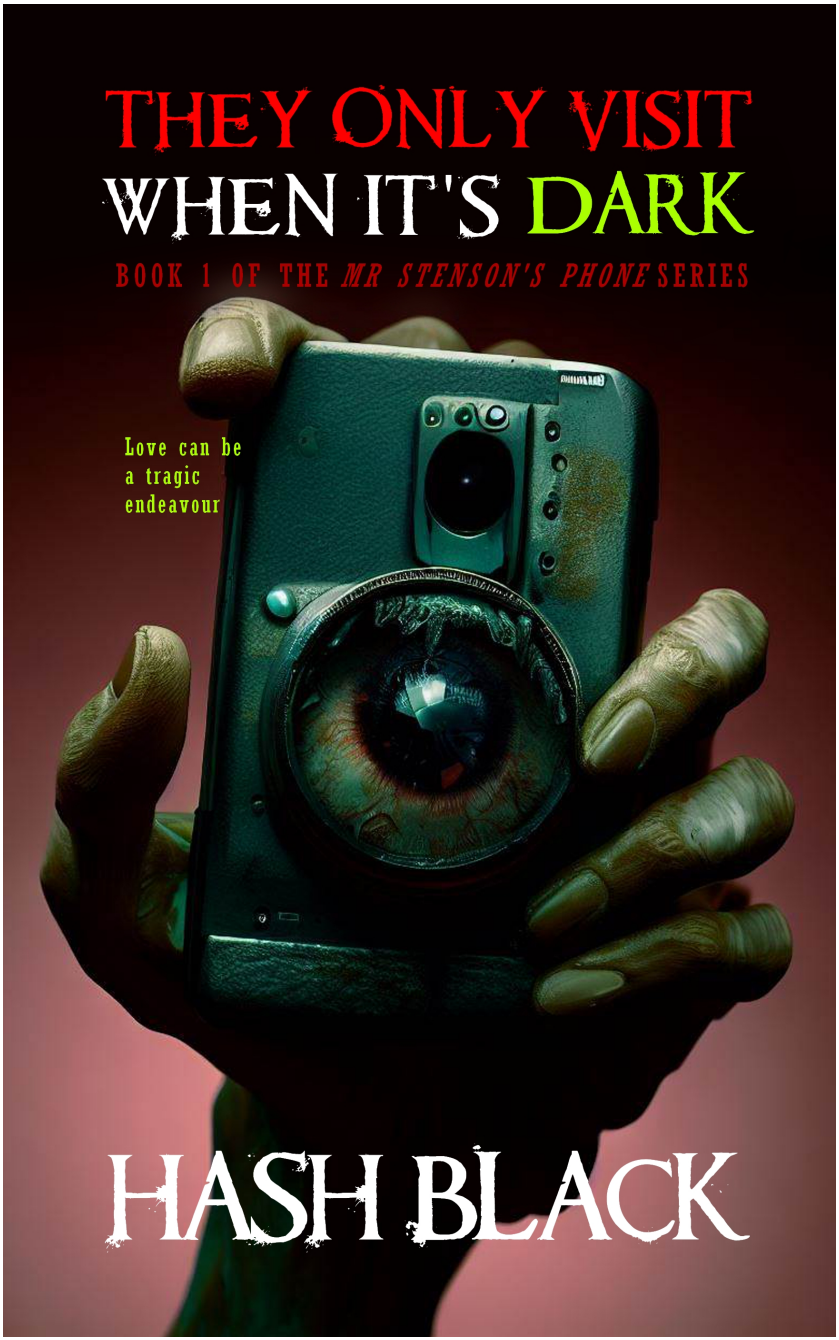
THEY ONLY VISIT WHEN IT'S DARK

BOOK 1 OF THE *MR STENSON'S PHONE* SERIES



HASH BLACK

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Hash Black

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They Only Visit When it's Dark

Ah, love… It is the one blinding drug that makes sane young men do damning things. Unfortunately for me, however, the one damning thing I did paid dividends in the most sinister of ways. Ways I'm forced to relive until I depart this wretched world.

My name is David Grimsley, and I cemented my eternal damnation fourteen years ago, back when my wits were sharp and my taste for adventure shined its brightest. I was only twelve back then, and though I mostly kept to myself, trouble found me as often as it did any other dorky, freckled, and snort-faced teenager. It didn't help either that I was much too short for my age, or that I was the smartest in my class.

Like many unfortunate chains of events, mine started with the adoration of a girl. My sweet, lovely Madeline. Her golden hair shined underneath the midday sun, and the sweet scent of her perfume was like heaven on a blossoming spring morning. Blinded by the sweet veil of love, I took it upon myself to sweep her off her feet and take her sweet breath away. Alas, how successfully I achieved just that.

Oh, how hard I tried to suckle at the sweet nectar of her divine attention. From charming smiles in the hallway, to love notes in her locker, to bribing her best friend, and my neighbour, Hailey to put in a good word for me.

Nothing seemed to work. Truth be told, I repelled her the more I tried. It didn't help either that I was the butt of every joke and prank ever played in class.

It wasn't until one fateful morning when I was getting books from my locker that Madeline and Hailey walked right past me. Sure, Hailey ignored me. She never spoke to me in public, saying I made her look bad in front of her friends, but she was soft on me back at home. In that magical moment, I fixed my eyes solely on the divine beauty of Madeline alone. My world slowed in her presence as I marvelled at her golden hair fluttering whimsically in

the air. She brushed a stray strand from her face, and had I moved inches to my right, our eyes would have locked in a sweet and enchanting moment of pure magic.

I watched from a distance as they stopped by Hailey's locker, laughing through a conversation I was too far to hear. My heart beat faster by the second, and a strange urge came over me, burning my insides to go talk to her. My body flushed with heat, and sweat percolated in my armpits. That didn't matter, though, because I needed to talk to her. I needed to profess my love for her.

As if possessed, my legs turned and carried me straight towards Madeline and Hailey. A voice in my head screamed at my legs, begging them to stop and turn, but my legs turned a deaf ear, opting instead to keep me steady upon this brave path of paralysing dread. One step after the other, stride after stride, the two ladies grew closer and closer. Silence engulfed the hallway, leaving only the tapping of my feet and thumping of my heart.

This is it, I thought. It's now or never.

Next thing, I was right in front of the two girls. I barely noticed they had stopped talking as they turned to face me. Maddie's beauty was sublime up close. She let her golden hair down to hang over her shoulders, and it shimmered under the soft cast of the fluorescent light overhead. Her eyes enchanted me, drawing me in closer by the second as she… frowned at me.

My heart stopped.

She raised an eyebrow.

She wants me to talk, I finally figured. I need to say something.

The heat in my body rose and coalesced in my cheeks. Sweat seeped from my pores and dampened my shirt. I opened my mouth to speak, but my brain failed to cultivate a trail of thought. A pained squeak squeezed out instead. Horrified, I tried once more.

Squeak.

I swallowed hard, lubricating my throat, getting ready to try once more when I noticed her hand cupping her mouth. She shook uncontrollably before letting out a shriek of laughter. Hailey followed next.

An uproar broke loose, and that's when I noticed the entire school surrounding us in the hallway. Everyone around me was quivering with laughter.

'Look!' a voice called from the crowd. 'It's sweaty Davey!'

I checked my shirt to see big, wet patches clinging to my

armpits. More laughter erupted.

'More like squeaky Davey,' another voice called.

Another wave of deafening laughter washed over me. I looked around and noticed the entire school was all around us. Everyone seemed taller than me. Louder. I felt myself shrink in the middle of a hysterical crowd. Soon, the noises somehow drowned out. My other senses dimmed, too. It was as if I was floating. My vision remained, yet everything blurred. Everyone towered over me, pointing my way and laughing. Some clutched their bellies, others had their hands on their knees, and others leaned against the walls, all gasping for air as they cried with laughter. Everything went blank from there.

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About the Author

Hash Black is an author with a flair for writing horror fiction. Ironically, his educational background is rooted in marine biology, and has an innate love for coral reefs. However, he has always enjoyed writing his heart out as he grew up. R. L. Stine was a major influence during those days, with Goosebumps and Fear Street series getting lots of traction among his peers. Finally, at the age of 30, Hash gave in to his passion for writing.

Enjoy the fruits of his efforts and support his journey along this winding adventure of writership.